

# Intrinsic rigidity of extremal horizons and black hole uniqueness

James Lucietti

University of Edinburgh

Jerzy Lewandowski Memorial Conference  
Banach Centre, Warsaw  
15 September 2025

# Outline

- Black holes & extremal horizons

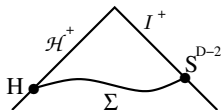
Note: first uniqueness theorem for extremal horizons by Jurek  
[Lewandowski, Pawłowski '02]

- Intrinsic rigidity theorem for extremal horizons [Dunajski, JL '23]  
Einstein-Maxwell theory [Colling, Katona, JL '24]  
See also talk by Colling.
- Applications to black hole uniqueness theorems [Katona, JL '23]

# Black holes in General Relativity

Uniqueness theorem [Israel, Carter, Hawking, Robinson, Mazur, Bunting, '70...]

The DOC of  $d = 4$  asymptotically flat, stationary, vacuum, analytic, spacetime with connected black hole is a Kerr solution.



- Topology [Hawking '72; Chrusciel, Wald '94]: Cross-sections  $H \cong S^2$ .  
Rigidity [Hawking '72]: stationary  $\implies$  axisymmetric or static
- $\mathcal{H}^+$  is Killing horizon:  $\nabla_V V = \kappa V$  on  $\mathcal{H}^+$ , normal Killing  $V$   
*Extremal*  $\kappa = 0$ : [Meinel et al '08; Figueras, JL '09; Chrusciel, Nguyen '10]  
Requires *near-horizon geometry*...

## Extremal horizons

- $\mathcal{H}^+$ : null hypersurface with normal Killing vector  $V$  and  $\kappa = 0$   
 $S$ : cross-section,  $n := d - 2$ -dimensional, transverse to  $V$
- *Intrinsic data* on  $S$ : Riemannian (induced) metric  $g$ , 1-form  $X$  defined by  $\nabla_W V = -\frac{1}{2}X(W)V$  on  $\mathcal{H}^+$  for  $W \in T\mathcal{H}^+$ .
- $\text{Ric}(g) = \Lambda g$  on  $\mathcal{H}^+ \iff$  to *quasi-Einstein equation* on  $S$ :

$$\text{Ric}(g) = \frac{1}{2}X \otimes X - \frac{1}{2}\mathcal{L}_X g + \Lambda g$$

Note: intrinsic data decouples from extrinsic data iff  $\kappa = 0$ !

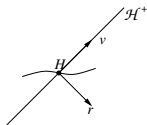
- Extremal isolated horizons also satisfy quasi-Einstein equation  
[Ashtekar, Beetle, Lewandowski, Pawłowski '02...]

## Near-horizon geometry

- Isenberg-Moncrief (Gaussian-null) coords near an extremal  $\mathcal{H}^+$

$$\mathbf{g} = r^2 F(r, x) dv^2 + 2dvdr + 2r X_a(r, x) dv dx^a + g_{ab}(r, x) dx^a dx^b$$

$V = \partial_v$ ,  $\partial_r$  transverse,  $\mathcal{H}^+ = \{r = 0\}$ ,  $x^a$  coords on  $S$



- *Near-horizon geometry* [Reall '02]: associated spacetime which encodes only intrinsic data  $(g, X, F)_{r=0}$  (scaling limit).  
*Einstein* iff  $(S, g, X)$  quasi-Einstein,  $F = \frac{1}{2}|X|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\text{div}_g X + \Lambda$ .  
[Chrusciel, Reall, Tod '05; Kunduri, JL '08...]
- Classify compact quasi-Einstein manifolds  $(S, g, X)$ ? Difficult!

# Static horizons

Static rigidity [Chrusciel, Tod, Reall '05; Bahuaud, Gunasekaran, Kunduri, Woolgar '22; Wylie '23; Kaminski, Lewandowski '24]

Let  $(S, g, X)$  be a compact quasi-Einstein manifold with  $dX = 0$ :

- $\Lambda = 0$  then  $X \equiv 0$  and  $\text{Ric}(g) = 0$  (trivial).
  - $\Lambda < 0$  then either:
    - $X \equiv 0$  and  $\text{Ric} = \Lambda g$ .
    - $S$  is quotient of  $\mathbb{R} \times N$ ,  $g = dz^2 + \tilde{g}$ ,  $X \propto \partial_z$ ,  $(N, \tilde{g})$ ,  $\text{Ric}_{\tilde{g}} = \Lambda \tilde{g}$ .
  - $\Lambda > 0$ :  $n = 2$  then  $X \equiv 0$ ,  $\text{Ric} = \Lambda g$ .  $n \geq 3$  then  $X$  gradient.
- 
- Near-horizon geometry static  $V \wedge dV = 0 \iff dX = 0$  on  $S$ .
  - $n \geq 3$ ,  $\Lambda > 0$ : classify nontrivial compact gradient solutions?

## Axially symmetric two-horizons

Horizon uniqueness [Hajicek '74; Lewandowski, Pawłowski '02; Kunduri, JL '08]

Any axially-symmetric vacuum extremal horizon with an  $S^2$  cross-section is an extremal Kerr or Kerr-(A)dS horizon.

- Axial symmetry reduces horizon equation to ODE system and general *local* solution can be found even for  $\Lambda \neq 0$ .
- Global analysis: metric that extends smoothly on  $S^2$  ( $\Lambda = 0$ )

$$g = \frac{a^2(1+x^2)}{1-x^2} dx^2 + \frac{4a^2(1-x^2)}{1+x^2} d\phi^2,$$

$$X = \Gamma^{-1} K^\flat - \frac{d\Gamma}{\Gamma}, \quad K = \partial_\phi, \quad \Gamma = a^2(1+x^2)$$

$|x| < 1$ ,  $\partial_\phi$  is  $2\pi$ -periodic Killing field,  $a > 0$  constant

## Two-horizons

- General solution to horizon quasi-Einstein equation on  $S^2$ ?
  - Axial symmetry motivated by rigidity theorem for black holes. But is there an intrinsic proof of axial symmetry?
  - Rigidity of linearised perturbations of the extremal Kerr horizon  
[Jeziński, Kaminski '12; Chrusciel, Szybka, Tod '17; Bauhaud, Gunasekaran, Kunduri, Woolgar '23]
- Intrinsic topology theorem:  $R_g = \frac{1}{2}|X|^2 - \operatorname{div}_g X + n\Lambda$ .  
 $\Lambda \geq 0$ :  $\int_S R_g \geq 0$  so  $S = S^2, T^2$ .  $T^2$  case is trivial  $X \equiv 0$ .
- $\Lambda < 0$ : genus  $g > 0$  horizons all trivial  $X \equiv 0$ ,  $\operatorname{Ric}(g) = \Lambda g$   
[Dobkowski-Rylko, Kaminski, Lewandowski, Szereszewski '18]

# Intrinsic rigidity of extremal horizons

## Rigidity theorem [Dunajski, JL '23]

Let  $(S, g, X)$  be an  $n$ -dimensional compact Riemannian manifold with non-gradient  $X$  that satisfies horizon quasi-Einstein equation. Then there exists a Killing vector field  $K$  such that  $[K, X] = 0$ .

- $dX \neq 0 \iff$  non-static. Complements static classification.
- More rigid than Einstein manifolds!
- $[K, X] = 0 \implies K$  a Killing vector of near-horizon geometry.

$\Lambda > 0, n > 2$  proof more nontrivial [Colling, Dunajski, Kunduri, JL '24]

Unified proof for all  $\Lambda$  [Kaminski, Lewandowski '24]

### Horizon uniqueness theorem [Dunajski, JL '23]

The extremal Kerr horizon, possibly with cosmological constant, is unique solution to horizon quasi-Einstein eq on  $S^2$ .

- This completes classification of vacuum extremal horizons with a compact cross-section for any  $\Lambda$ .

### Near-horizon symmetry enhancement theorem [Dunajski, JL '23]

A vacuum near-horizon geometry with compact cross-sections has an isometry group of a 2d maximally symmetric space (3d orbits).

- This is a significant generalisation of prior NH-symmetry theorem which *assumes*  $U(1)^{n-1}$  symmetry [Kunduri, JL, Reall '07]

## Rigidity proof - strategy

- Inspired by Kerr solution, for any function  $\Gamma > 0$ , let

$$K := \Gamma X + d\Gamma$$

Idea: try to prove  $K$  is a Killing field for suitable choice of  $\Gamma$ .

- Given a 1-form  $X$  on a compact Riemannian mfd  $(S, g)$  there exists a smooth  $\Gamma > 0$  so  $\operatorname{div}_g K = 0$ . [Tod '92; JL, Reall '13]
  - Elliptic operator  $L\psi := -\operatorname{div}_g(d\psi + X\psi)$  on  $(S, g)$ . Principal eigenfunction exists and is positive  $L\psi = \mu\psi$ .
  - Integrate over  $S$  implies  $\mu = 0$ . Take  $\Gamma$  to be solution  $L\Gamma = 0$ .

## Rigidity proof – remarkable identity

- Precise form of quasi-Einstein equation implies, for all  $\Gamma > 0$ ,

$$\frac{1}{4}|\mathcal{L}_K g|^2 = \operatorname{div}_g Y + Z \operatorname{div}_g K$$

$$Y := \frac{1}{2}(\mathcal{L}_K g)(K, \cdot) - \frac{1}{2}K \Delta \Gamma - \frac{1}{2}K \operatorname{div}_g K - \Lambda \Gamma K$$

$$Z := -\frac{1}{2\Gamma}|K|^2 + \frac{1}{2}\Delta \Gamma + \frac{1}{2}\operatorname{div}_g K + \frac{1}{2\Gamma}\mathcal{L}_K \Gamma + \Lambda \Gamma$$

- Now take  $\Gamma$  to be principal eigenfunction so  $\operatorname{div}_g K = 0$ :

$$\int_S |\mathcal{L}_K g|^2 \operatorname{dvol}_g = 0 \quad \implies \quad \mathcal{L}_K g = 0$$

- Identity reduces to  $\operatorname{div}_g Y = 0 \iff \Delta(\mathcal{L}_K \Gamma) = -2\Lambda \mathcal{L}_K \Gamma$ ;  
 $\Lambda \leq 0 \implies \mathcal{L}_K \Gamma = 0$  so  $[K, X] = 0$ .  $\Lambda > 0$  a bit more work.

Recent generalised identity that allows unified proof for all  $\Lambda$ .

[Kaminski, Lewandowski '24]

# Electrovacuum extremal horizons

## Rigidity theorem [Colling, Katona, JL '24]

Let  $(S, g)$  be a 2-dimensional compact Riemannian mfd that satisfies quasi-Einstein-Maxwell eqs with non-gradient  $X$ . Then there exists a Killing vector field  $K$  and  $[K, X] = \mathcal{L}_K \psi = \mathcal{L}_K \beta = 0$ .

- Einstein-Maxwell eqs restrict to quasi-Einstein-Maxwell eqs on cross-section  $S$ . Maxwell data: EM potentials  $\psi, \beta$
- Remarkable identity generalises: if  $K = \Gamma X + d\Gamma$  for any  $\Gamma > 0$

$$\frac{1}{4} |\mathcal{L}_K g|^2 + |\nabla(\Gamma \sqrt{\psi^2 + \beta^2})|^2 = \operatorname{div}_g \tilde{Y} + \tilde{Z} \operatorname{div}_g K$$

- $S^2$  and axial sym  $\implies$  extremal Kerr-Newman- $\Lambda$  horizon  
[Lewandowski, Pawłowski '02; Kunduri, JL '08]

Completes classification (higher genus can be ruled out)

# Transverse deformations of extremal horizons

- Given a near-horizon geometry a corresponding black hole solution may not exist or be unique.
- *Transverse derivatives* at extremal horizon:  $g_{ab}^{(n)} := \partial_r^n g_{ab}|_{r=0}$ .  
Einstein  $\implies$  elliptic problem on  $S$  at each order  $n$  [Li, JL '15]
- Vacuum axisymmetric  $n = 1$  transverse derivatives of extremal Kerr( $-\Lambda$ ) horizon are unique. [Li, JL '15 '18]
- Unique at every order? Don't expect so, no asymptotic input!  
  
E.g.  $n = 1$  derivatives of Reissner-Nordstrom/Kerr-Newman not unique [Li, JL '18, Kolanowski '21]

## Example: extremal Schwarzschild de Sitter

### Uniqueness theorem [Katona, JL '23]

Any analytic Einstein spacetime with  $\Lambda > 0$ , that contains a static extremal Killing horizon with a compact cross-section  $S$  (if  $n > 2$  maximal sym.), is locally isometric to extremal Schwarzschild dS spacetime or its near-horizon geometry  $dS_2 \times S^n$  (Nariai solution).

- $d = 4$ : static horizon with compact cross-section must have maximal symmetry [Chrusciel, Reall, Tod '05].
- No global assumptions such as asymptotics or topology!  
Hence rules out (analytic) multi-black holes.
- First uniqueness theorem for extremal vacuum black holes with  $\Lambda$  for  $d \geq 4$  dimensions.

## Proof sketch

- Horizon data:  $g^{(0)} = r_0^2 d\Omega_{d-2}^2$ ,  $X_a^{(0)} = 0$ ,  $F^{(0)} = \Lambda$  (Nariai)
- Gauge freedom  $g_{ab}^{(1)} \rightarrow g_{ab}^{(1)} + \nabla_a \nabla_b f$ , fix trace  $g_{ab}^{(1)}$  to const. First order  $g_{ab}^{(1)} = C g_{ab}^{(0)}$ ,  $X_a^{(1)} = 0$ ,  $F^{(1)} = \text{const}$  [Li, JL, '18]
- Einstein equation: assume soln to order  $n - 1$ , then for  $n \geq 2$

$$-\nabla^2 \hat{g}_{ab}^{(n)} = -\Lambda \left( n^2 + n + \frac{2}{d-3} \right) \hat{g}_{ab}^{(n)} \quad \text{on } S$$

where  $\hat{g}_{ab}^{(n)} := g_{ab}^{(n)} - \frac{C^2}{2} \delta_{n,2} g_{ab}^{(0)}$  tracefree.

$\Lambda > 0 \implies \hat{g}_{ab}^{(n)} = 0$  as  $-\nabla^2$  positive,  $X_a^{(n)} = 0$ ,  $F^{(n)} = \text{const}$

- Analytic  $\implies g_{ab} = r_0^2 \left( 1 + \frac{Cr}{2} \right)^2 d\Omega_{d-2}^2$ ,  $X_a = 0$ ,  $F = F(r)$ .  
 $C \neq 0$  is Schwarzschild-dS,  $C = 0$  is near-horizon geometry

## Comments

- Constructive uniqueness proof for spacetimes with prescribed near-horizon geometry.
- $\Lambda < 0$  extremal hyperbolic Schwarzschild-AdS: uniqueness  $\lambda_n = (n^2 + n - 2)|\Lambda| \notin \text{spec of Laplacian on hyperbolic surface}$  and no cohomological obstruction to first order uniqueness.
- Generalises to Einstein-Maxwell theory if  $A_H \Lambda \geq 2\pi$  [Katona '24]
- Argument that generic extremal black holes with  $\Lambda \neq 0$  do not have smooth horizons [Horowitz, Kolanowski, Santos '22]

## Summary & Outlook

- Geometry of extremal black holes is a quasi-Einstein manifold. Study horizon topology/geometry independently to black hole.
- Extremal horizons enjoy remarkable intrinsic rigidity. Even for  $\Lambda \neq 0$  (no BH no-hair theorems here!).
  - Intrinsic proof of uniqueness of extremal Kerr horizon!
  - Axially symmetric in all dimensions!
  - Near-horizon symmetry enhancement generic
- Novel uniqueness theorem for analytic  $\Lambda > 0$  spacetimes containing a *static* extremal horizon. Persists with rotation?